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March 20, 2025, 6:30 pm ET

Click [here](#) to see ISW's interactive map of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Click [here](#) to see ISW's interactive map of Ukraine's offensive in Kursk Oblast.

Click [here](#) to see ISW's 3D control of terrain topographic map of Ukraine. Use of a computer (not a mobile device) is strongly recommended for using this data-heavy tool.

Click [here](#) to access ISW's archive of interactive time-lapse maps of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These maps complement the static control-of-terrain map that ISW produces daily by showing a dynamic frontline. ISW will update this time-lapse map archive monthly.

**Note: The data cut-off for this product was 12pm ET on March 20. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the March 21 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.**

**Ukrainian forces conducted a drone strike against Engels Airbase in Saratov Oblast on the night of March 19 to 20.** The Ukrainian General Staff reported on March 20 that elements of Ukraine's Security Service (SBU), Unmanned Systems Forces, Special Operations Forces (SSO), and other Ukrainian forces struck the Engels Airbase in Saratov Oblast causing a fire, explosions, and a secondary detonation of ammunition in the vicinity of the airfield.[1] Geolocated footage and other footage published on March 20 show an explosion and fire at the Engels Airbase.[2] The Ukrainian General Staff noted that Russian forces use Engels Airbase to conduct missile strikes against Ukraine, and an SBU source told Ukrainian news outlet *Suspilne* that Engels is a key base for Russian strategic aviation, housing Tu-95MS, Tu-22M3, and Tu-160 strategic bombers as well as FAB and KAB glide bombs and cruise missiles storage facilities.[3] Ukrainian Center for Countering Disinformation Head Lieutenant Andriy Kovalenko reported that the Ukrainian strike destroyed a large number of Russian Kh-101 cruise missiles that Russian forces use in nightly strikes against Ukraine.[4] Saratov Oblast Governor Roman Busargin claimed on March 20 that Ukrainian forces conducted the "most massive drone strike of all time" against Saratov Oblast and that Ukrainian drones struck civilian infrastructure near Engels and caused a fire near the base.[5]

**Russia, Ukraine, and the United States have not yet concluded the details of the moratorium against energy infrastructure strikes. The Ukrainian strike against Engels Airbase would not have been subject to this moratorium in any event because it is a military target.** Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova absurdly

accused Ukraine of violating the Russia-Ukraine 30-day moratorium on strikes against "energy infrastructure" by targeting the Engels Air Base.[6] Russian forces notably conducted strikes against Ukrainian energy and other infrastructure on both nights since Russian President Vladimir Putin's March 18 statements agreeing to the moratorium.[7]

**The Kremlin announced that Russia and the United States will hold another round of talks in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on March 24, and it is unclear whether these talks will include Ukraine.** Russian Presidential Aide for International Affairs Yuriy Ushakov announced on March 20 that Russian Federation Council International Affairs Committee Chairperson Grigory Karasin and the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) Director's advisor, Colonel General Sergei Beseda, will lead the Russian delegation in bilateral discussions on the technical details of a possible maritime ceasefire in the Black Sea with US officials in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on March 24.[8] Beseda served as the Director of the FSB's Fifth Directorate, which is officially tasked with overseeing operational information and international relations, from 2009 to 2024.[9] Karasin worked in Russia's MFA from the 1970s to 2019 and served as a Deputy Foreign Minister in 1996 and from 2005 to 2019, when Karasin joined the Federation Council.[10] Karasin has headed the Federation Council Committee on International Affairs since 2021. Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova stated on March 20 that Russian MFA representatives will not participate in the March 24 talks in Riyadh.[11] US State Department Spokesperson Tammy Bruce stated on March 19 in response to a question about whether these talks will be bilateral or trilateral that it is "still being discussed or arranged." [12]

**Kremlin officials continue to amplify narratives indicating that Putin remains committed to his long-standing goal of conquering Ukraine and is attempting to leverage upcoming ceasefire negotiations to secure preemptive concessions from Ukraine and the United States.** Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu reiterated claims on March 20 that the Ukrainian government is illegitimate and that Ukrainian authorities must repeal the September 2022 decree banning negotiations with Putin before Ukraine and Russia can discuss the end of the war.[13] Shoigu also claimed that Ukraine must change its constitutional clauses regarding "territorial integrity." The Ukrainian Constitution recognizes occupied Crimea and Sevastopol and Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts as Ukrainian and forbids the Ukrainian government from amending the constitution if the amendment is "oriented towards the liquidation of [Ukraine's] independence or violation of [Ukraine's] territorial indivisibility." [14] Shoigu is likely calling for Ukrainian authorities to amend the constitution in order to allow Ukraine to recognize Russia's occupation and illegal annexation of occupied Ukraine.

Russian authorities have repeatedly mischaracterized the Ukrainian Constitution in order to legitimize Russian calls for regime change in Ukraine and to justify Putin's ongoing efforts to delay peace negotiations and blame Ukraine for the lack of progress toward peace. Putin claimed that there are "serious risks" associated with Ukraine's "inability to negotiate" in the Kremlin readout of his March 18 call with US President Donald Trump, possibly referring to Putin's previous claims about Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's supposed illegitimacy.[15] The Ukrainian Constitution bars the government from holding elections or amending the Ukrainian Constitution in times of martial law, and the Ukrainian government cannot legally lift martial law while Russia continues to attack Ukraine.[16]

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) appears to be amplifying Kremlin narratives and lending credibility to some of the Kremlin's demands. The CCP-operated English language *China Daily* outlet stated in an editorial published on March 19 that the West's unwillingness to halt all military and intelligence support to Ukraine in response to Putin's March 18 demand has "complicat[ed] the path of peace."<sup>[17]</sup> The editorial states that "no country should build its security on the insecurity of another." The Kremlin reported that Putin demanded that the West stop all military aid and intelligence sharing with Ukraine as a "key condition" for working towards ending the war during his March 18 call with Trump.<sup>[18]</sup> Putin has made similar demands for Ukraine to reject foreign military assistance and abandon its aspirations to join an external security bloc — particularly NATO — since the beginning of the war, and the *China Daily's* editorial appears to be at least in part justifying Putin's long-standing demand that the West cut all military aid to Ukraine.<sup>[19]</sup>

**Kremlin officials are also working to exacerbate tension between the United States and its European allies in order to break Western support for Ukraine and undermine the NATO alliance.** Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov claimed on March 20 that Europe's "plans to militarize" are "clearly at odds with" Putin's and Trump's efforts to pursue peace in Ukraine and that Europe has become a "war party."<sup>[20]</sup> Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesperson Maria Zakharova claimed on March 7 that Europe is a "militarized union" that is "deliberately fueling" escalation between the West and Russia.<sup>[21]</sup> Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) Vasily Nebenzya and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov have also recently framed European countries (in contrast with the United States) as aggressive towards Russia, indicating a new Kremlin effort to drive a wedge between the United States and Europe.<sup>[22]</sup>

**Putin continues to condition domestic Russian audiences to prepare for a protracted war in Ukraine rather than a sustainable peace built on compromise.** Putin's and other Kremlin officials' statements in recent days and weeks perpetuating narratives about the difficulty of negotiations, the illegitimacy of Ukrainian officials, and US-European divisions reinforce messaging that Russia expects a prolonged war in Ukraine and peace only on Russian terms. Putin also reportedly directly told Russian businessmen to prepare for a protracted war. Russian business journalists Farida Rustamova and Maxim Tovkaylo reported on March 20 that Putin held a private meeting with Russian businessmen at the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Congress ahead of Putin's call with Trump on March 18.<sup>[23]</sup> Rustamova and Tovkaylo cited two sources at the meeting and one source with knowledge of the meeting as saying that Putin told the businessmen that negotiations to end the war would be slow and difficult and advised the businessmen "not to be naive" given the people and issues involved in negotiations.<sup>[24]</sup> Putin also publicly stated at the congress that Russia should not expect the West to lift sanctions quickly.<sup>[25]</sup> The Kremlin has long broadcasted Russian demands for territorial and security concessions beyond the current frontlines as a return on investment for the Russian people to justify the war effort to its domestic audience.<sup>[26]</sup> Putin and other Kremlin officials will likely continue messaging to domestic audiences that the war in Ukraine remains a protracted Russian effort and that Russia will not make peace in Ukraine quickly.

**The Kremlin is intensifying efforts to change the demographic makeup of occupied Ukraine in order to legitimize Putin's claim over occupied areas.** Putin signed a decree on March 20 mandating that Ukrainian civilians who are "illegally" living in Russia and occupied Ukraine must "regulate their legal status" or leave Russia and occupied Ukraine by September 10, 2025.<sup>[27]</sup> The

Kremlin has conducted a thorough passportization campaign to coerce Ukrainians living under occupation into obtaining Russian citizenship in efforts to legitimize Russia's territorial claims over occupied areas and tighten control over local populaces.[28] The Kremlin has also conducted Russian repopulation campaigns to artificially decrease the number of Ukrainians living in occupied Ukraine and inflate the number of Russians in these areas.[29] Putin's March 20 decree also obliges "foreigners," presumably including those with Ukrainian citizenship, and stateless persons entering occupied Ukraine to take Russian medical exams and blood tests.[30] The Kremlin has historically used these tests to obtain personal data to later exert pressure on Ukrainians to comply with occupation authorities and serve in the Russian military, as well as to forcibly deport Ukrainian children to Russia.[31]

**The Kremlin also continues Russifying Ukrainian children in occupied areas to further the destruction of Ukrainian national and cultural identity and to portray Russia as the humane governor of occupied Ukraine.** Kremlin Children's Rights Ombudsman Maria Lvova-Belova met with Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Head Denis Pushilin on March 20 and claimed that occupation authorities sent 127 ill Ukrainian children to medical treatment in unspecified locations, likely including in Russia, and that 1,346 Ukrainian children participated in the "Day After Tomorrow" social adaptation project for youths.[32] Lvova-Belova stated that occupation officials opened two youth centers in occupied Makiivka and Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast, and that these centers often host social events for youths, including Ukrainian minors under Russian guardianship.[33] The Kremlin has frequently used forced deportations of Ukrainian children and youth social organizations to indoctrinate Ukrainian children into Russian military-patriotic education and eradicate their Ukrainian identities.[34] Lvova-Belova also proposed that Pushilin create a social system to place 500 Ukrainian children who are currently in state custody in occupied Donetsk Oblast with Russian families and noted that many of these children have relatives who can take in the children.[35] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky recently stated that Ukraine will not compromise on the return of Ukrainian children to unoccupied Ukraine, and the US-Ukrainian joint statement agreeing on a 30-day ceasefire similarly emphasized the importance of returning forcibly deported Ukrainian children.[36] The Kremlin's continued efforts to forcibly deport and indoctrinate Ukrainian children — instead of working with Ukrainian authorities to return these children to Ukraine — underscores how committed the Kremlin remains to eradicating Ukrainian identity and strengthening its claim over occupied Ukraine.

**Kremlin officials continue advertising the possibility of future economic cooperation with the United States, likely to extract preemptive concessions from the United States in ceasefire or peace negotiations.** Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported on March 20 that it obtained a copy of a letter in which Russian Federation Council Committee on Economic Policy Chairperson Andrei Kutepov proposed to Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov the creation of a rare earth metals fund for cooperation with foreign investors.[37] *TASS* claimed that the letter states that Russian actors will control the fund and will prevent foreign investors from holding shares directly in foreign projects but will still compensate them.[38] *TASS* reported that Kutepov first wrote the letter following a December 2024 meeting on subsoil licensing. *TASS*'s decision to platform this letter only now amid ongoing US-Ukrainian talks about a mineral deal indicates that Russian state media likely intended for this letter to offer a more enticing deal to the United States and spoil the US-Ukrainian deal. Senior Russian officials, including Putin, have also recently emphasized economic incentives for the United States, likely in return for concessions favorable to Russia.[39] Trump noted during his

March 18 call with Putin that the United States and Russia can conclude "enormous economic deals" after there is peace in Ukraine.[40]

**Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and President Trump spoke about investments in Ukraine's energy infrastructure during their call on March 19.** Zelensky reported on March 19 that the two leaders discussed how the United States can help restore the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP).[41] Zelensky indicated to Trump that Ukraine is open to US investment in Ukraine's energy infrastructure, including the ZNPP, but reiterated on March 20 that "all nuclear power plants belong to the people of Ukraine." [42] US State Department Spokesperson Tammy Bruce stated on March 19 that Trump believes a US company's ownership of Ukraine's nuclear power plants and energy facilities would be an effective deterrent against future Russian strikes and would contribute to a positive economic partnership between Ukraine and the United States that would increase Ukraine's economic viability.[43]

**US State Department Spokesperson Tammy Bruce condemned North Korea's involvement in Russia's war against Ukraine on March 19 and expressed concern about Russian support to North Korea.**[44] Bruce emphasized that North Korea's military cooperation with Russia, including troop deployments, fuels and exacerbates the war in Ukraine. Bruce stressed that both Russia and North Korea bear responsibility for perpetuating the war in Ukraine and called for an end to military support by both sides. North Korea has supplied Russia with Kn-23 ballistic missiles, artillery shells, and personnel in its ongoing effort to support Russia's war against Ukraine.[45] Ukrainian and other Western officials have previously noted that North Korean involvement in Russia's offensive operations in Kursk Oblast and broader cooperation with Russia has particularly enhanced North Korea's military capabilities, possibly posing security risks in the Asia-Pacific region.[46]

**Ukraine's allies continue to provide financial and material military assistance to Ukraine, including funds from frozen Russian assets in Europe.** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced on March 20 that Ukraine recently received "several" additional F-16s from unspecified partners.[47] The European Commission announced on March 20 that its exceptional Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) loan program issued Ukraine the second tranche of funds with revenue generated from the proceeds of frozen Russian assets worth one billion euros (roughly \$1.08 billion).[48] The loan is part of the G7-led Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) loans initiative which plans to provide 45 billion euros (roughly \$48.8 billion) in financial support to Ukraine.

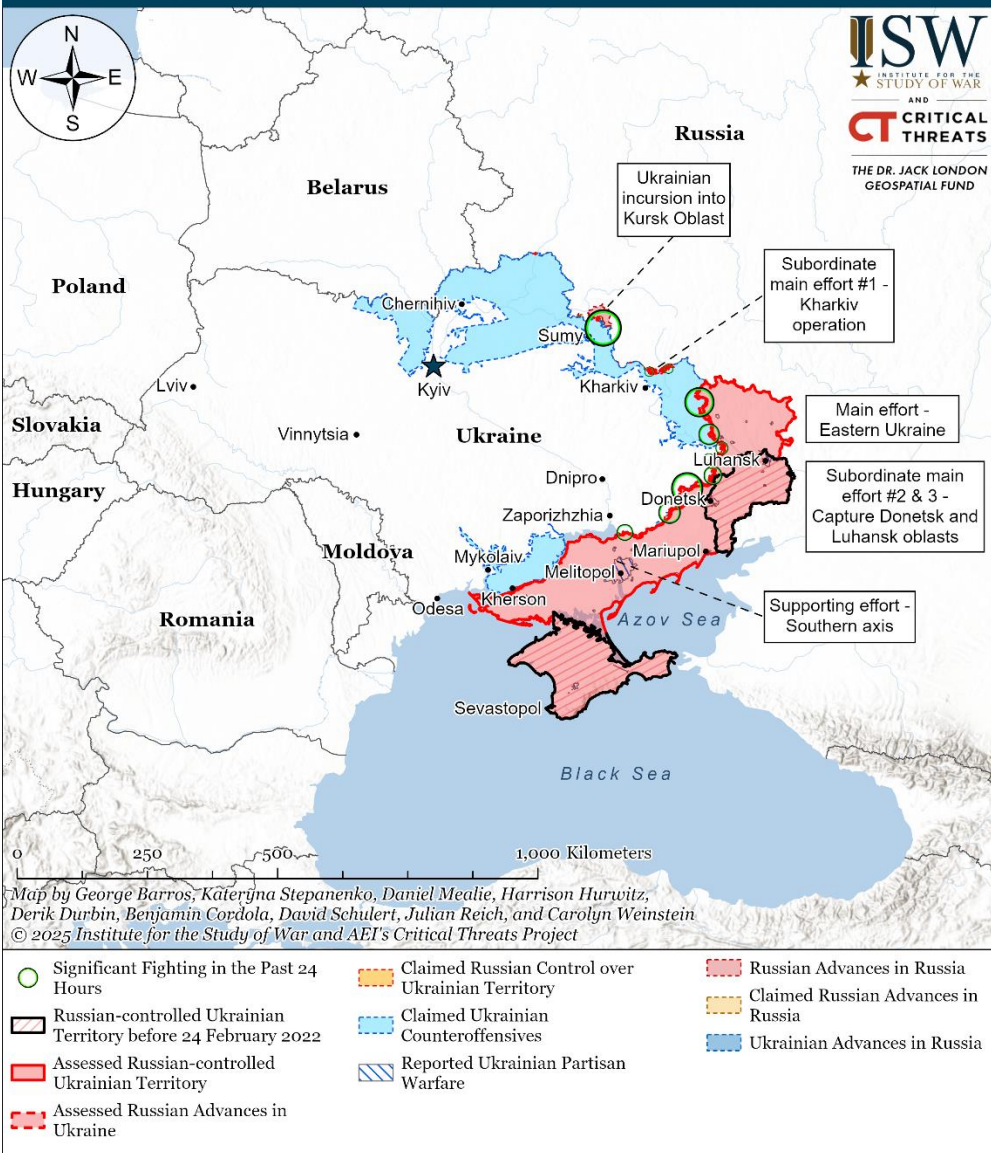
#### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Ukrainian forces conducted a drone strike against Engels Airbase in Saratov Oblast on the night of March 19 to 20.**
- **Russia, Ukraine, and the United States have not yet concluded the details of the moratorium against energy infrastructure strikes. The Ukrainian strike against Engels Airbase would not have been subject to this moratorium in any event because it is a military target.**
- **The Kremlin announced that Russia and the United States will hold another round of talks in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on March 24, and it is unclear whether these talks will include Ukraine.**

- **Kremlin officials continue to amplify narratives indicating that Russian President Vladimir Putin remains committed to his long-standing goals of conquering Ukraine and is attempting to leverage upcoming ceasefire negotiations to secure preemptive concessions from Ukraine and the United States.**
- **Kremlin officials are also working to exacerbate tension between the United States and its European allies in order to break Western support for Ukraine and undermine the NATO alliance.**
- **Putin continues to condition domestic Russian audiences to prepare for a protracted war in Ukraine rather than a sustainable peace built on compromise.**
- **The Kremlin is intensifying efforts to change the demographic makeup of occupied Ukraine in order to legitimize Putin's claim over occupied areas.**
- **The Kremlin also continues Russifying Ukrainian children in occupied areas to further the destruction of Ukrainian national and cultural identity and to portray Russia as the humane governor of occupied Ukraine.**
- **Kremlin officials continue advertising the possibility of future economic cooperation with the United States, likely to extract preemptive concessions from the United States in ceasefire or peace negotiations.**
- **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and US President Donald Trump spoke about investments in Ukraine's energy infrastructure during their call on March 19.**
- **US State Department Spokesperson Tammy Bruce condemned North Korea's involvement in Russia's war against Ukraine on March 19 and expressed concern about Russian support to North Korea.**
- **Ukraine's allies continue to provide financial and material military assistance to Ukraine, including funds from frozen Russian assets in Europe.**
- **Ukrainian forces recently advanced in Belgorod Oblast and Russian forces recently advanced in Kursk Oblast and near Toretsk, Pokrovsk, and Velyka Novosilka**
- **Russia may extend military veteran status to Russian milbloggers and military correspondents covering the war in Ukraine, likely in an effort to further coopt and appease the Russian ultranationalist milblogger community.**

# Assessed Control of Terrain in the Russo-Ukrainian War

## March 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



***We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.***

- Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation
- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)

- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Significant Activity in Belarus

### **Ukrainian Operations in the Russian Federation**

#### **Russian forces continued to advance in Kursk Oblast.**

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on March 19 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced in northern Rubanshchina (west of Sudzha) and in a forested area southeast of Gogolevka (immediately west of Rubanshchina).[49]

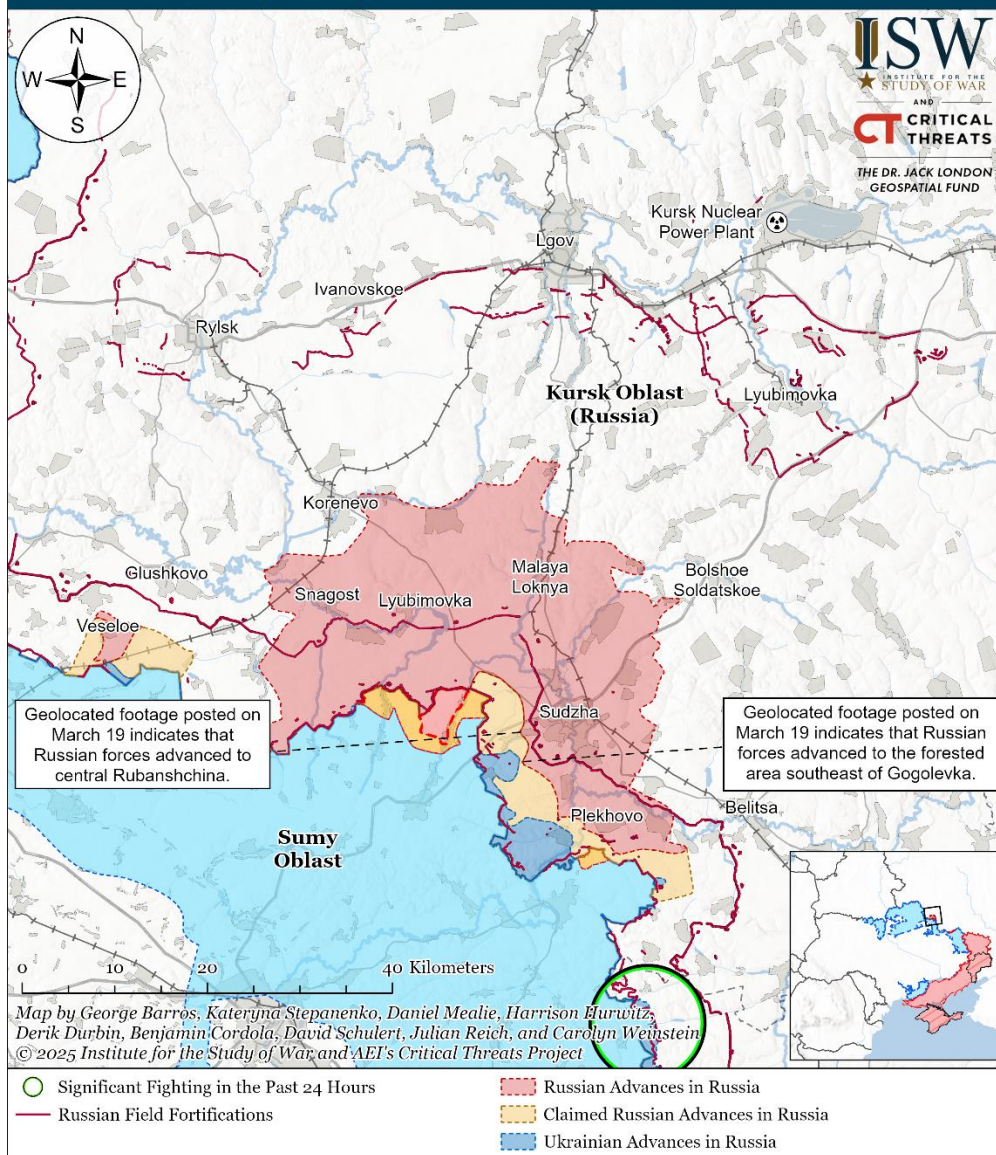
Unconfirmed claims: Russian mibloggers claimed that Russian forces continue clearing Gogolevka and that northern Basivka, Sumy Oblast (west of Sudzha) is a contested "gray" zone.[50] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced east of Novenke (north of Basivka).[51]

Russian forces continued ground attacks against the remaining Ukrainian positions in Kursk Oblast and near Basivka, Sumy Oblast on March 19 and 20.[52]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 92nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (201st Military Base, Central Military District [CMD]) and "Veterany" Assault Brigade (Russian Volunteer Corps) are operating in near-rear areas of Sudzhansky Raion, drone elements of the Smuglyanka Detachment are conducting reconnaissance near Guyevo (south of Sudzha), and elements of the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade (Black Sea Fleet) are reportedly operating near Kurilovka (south of Sudzha).[53]



## Assessed Control of Terrain in the Kursk Direction March 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



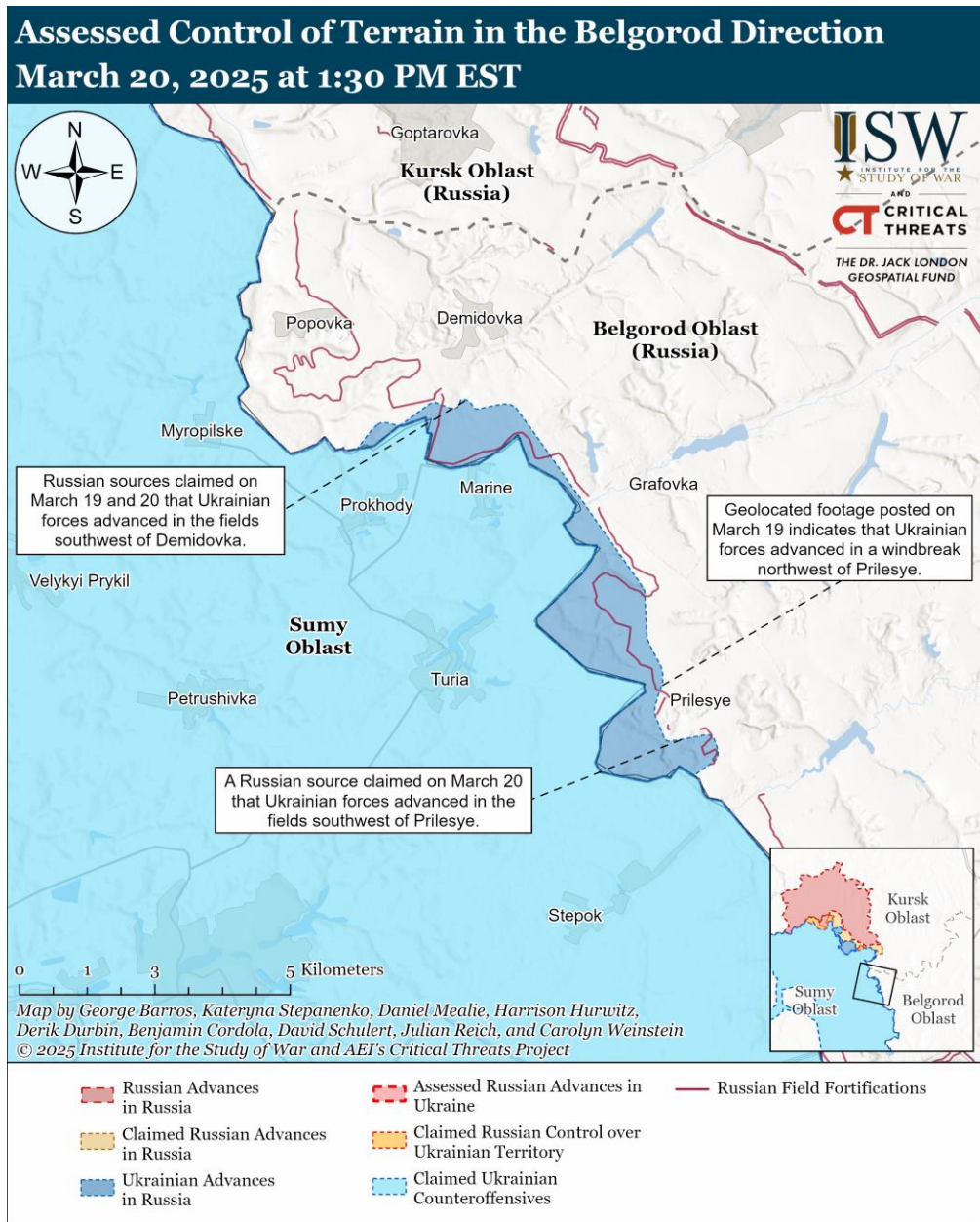
### Ukrainian forces recently marginally advanced in western Belgorod Oblast.

**Assessed Ukrainian Advances:** Geolocated footage published on March 19 indicates that Ukrainian forces recently marginally advanced northwest of Prilesye (northwest of Belgorod City along the international border).[54] Russian milbloggers published maps acknowledging Ukrainian advances in the field southwest of Demidovka (north of Prilesye), indicating that Ukrainian forces recently advanced in the area.[55]

**Unconfirmed Claims:** Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces advanced to the outskirts of Lipty (southwest of Prilesye) but have not seized Lipty or Demidovka.[56] One milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces have partially encircled Demidovka from the south, but another milblogger rejected claims that Ukrainian forces have advanced near the settlement.[57]

Russian milbloggers claimed on March 19 and 20 that Ukrainian forces continued to attack northwest of Belgorod City along the international border near Demidovka, Grafovka, Prelesye, and Liptyy.[58]

Russian sources noted that Ukrainian forces are operating a large number of drones, including fiber optic drones, in the area and that Ukrainian forces destroyed a bridge near Grafovka to complicate Russian logistics.[59] A Russian insider source claimed that the Russian military command is deploying reserve units to the international border in order to defend against Ukrainian attacks.[60]



**The Ukrainian General Staff reported on March 20 that Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian command post near Demidovka, Belgorod Oblast.[61]** The Ukrainian General Staff reported that elements of the Russian 3rd Motorized Rifle Division (20th Combined Arms Army [CAA],

Moscow Military District [MMD]) were using the command post to plan and conduct combat operations against Ukrainian forces in Sumy Oblast.

### **Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine**

#### **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Kharkiv Oblast (Russian objective: Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City)**

#### **Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kharkiv direction on March 20 but did not advance.**

Russian forces conducted offensive operations north of Kharkiv City near Hlyboke and northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk on March 19 and 20.[62]

Ukrainian Kharkiv Group of Forces Spokesperson Pavlo Shamshyn reported on March 20 that spring weather is significantly affecting the intensity of Russian assaults in the Kharkiv direction, with warmer weather conditions allowing Russian forces to stay longer on the front lines, although muddy ground often hampers movement.[63] Shamshyn noted that the size of the Russian force grouping near the Kharkiv Oblast along the Ukraine-Russia international border remains unchanged and that Russian forces are replenishing losses in the area and remain committed to creating a "buffer zone" along the international border.[64]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Chechen "Akhmat" Spetsnaz "Vakha" Battalion and the Russian 245th Motorized Rifle Regiment (47th Tank Division, 1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian targets near Chervona Zorya (along the international border northwest of Kharkiv City).[65]

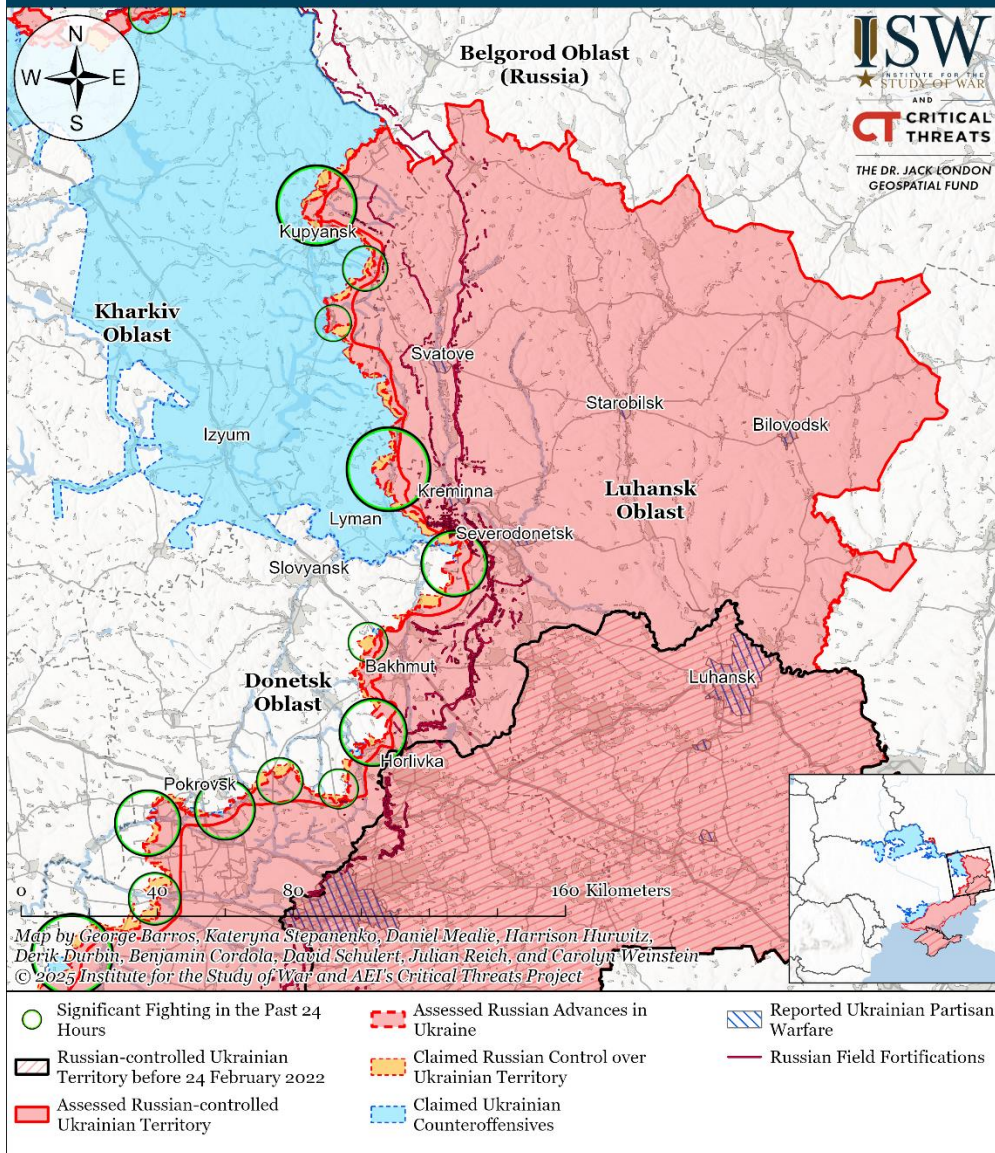
#### **Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)**

#### **Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kupyansk direction on March 20 but did not advance.**

Russian forces attacked north of Kupyansk near Kindrashivka and Dvorichna, northeast of Kupyansk near Kamyanka, and east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka on March 19 and 20.[66] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets stated that Ukrainian forces are counterattacking near Dvorichna (north of Kupyansk).[67]

Mashovets stated that Russian forces have recently created a new bridgehead along the road between Kamyanka and Kolodyazi (northeast of Lyman).[68]

## Assessed Control of Terrain in Luhansk Oblast March 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



**Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Borova direction on March 20 but did not advance.**

Russian forces attacked northeast of Borova near Zahryzove on March 19 and 20.[69]

The spokesperson of a Ukrainian brigade operating in the Borova direction reported on March 20 that Russian forces are deploying small infantry units to constantly attack in the direction.[70] The spokesperson noted that Russian forces are losing a significant number of armored vehicles and anti-tank weaponry due to Ukrainian drone strikes and that Russian forces now rarely use armored vehicles in the Borova direction.

**Russian forces continued offensive operation in the Lyman direction on March 20 but did not advance.**

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces are advancing west of Balka Zhuravka (formerly Nevske, northeast of Lyman).[71]

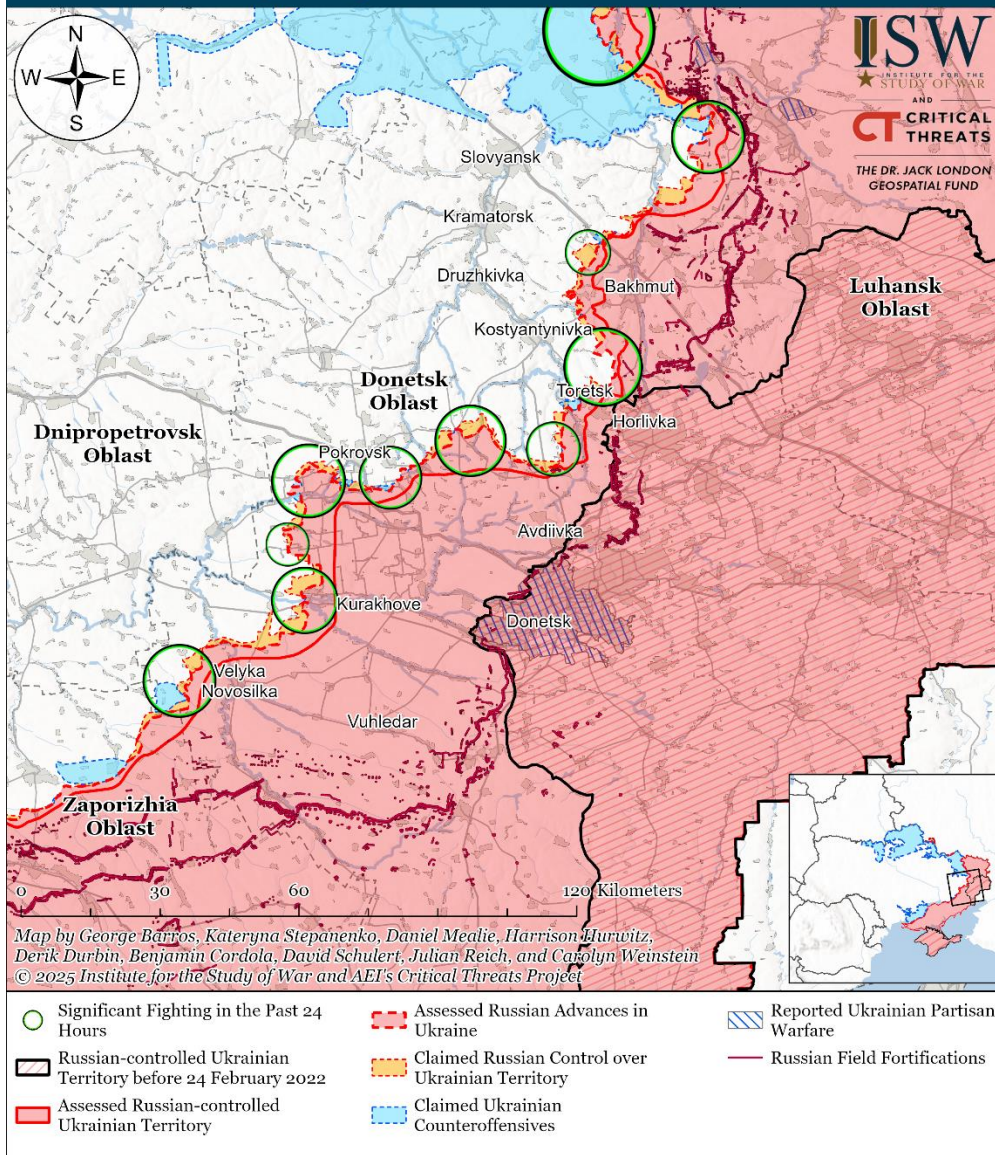
Russian forces conducted offensive operations northeast of Lyman near Yampolivka, Ivanivka, and toward Novomykhailivka, Nove, and Zelena Dolyna on March 19 and 20.[72]

**Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)**

**Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Siversk direction on March 20 but did not advance.**

Russian forces attacked northeast of Siversk near Bilohorivka and east of Siversk near Verkhokamyanske on March 19 and 20. [73]

## Assessed Control of Terrain in Donetsk Oblast March 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



### Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Chasiv Yar direction on March 20 but did not advance.

Russian forces attacked near Chasiv Yar itself, north of Chasiv Yar near Minkivka and Novomarkove, and south of Chasiv Yar toward Oleksandro-Shulytne and near Stupochky on March 19 and 20.[74] Footage posted on March 20 shows Ukrainian forces repelling an at least reinforced platoon-sized Russian mechanized assault in the Chasiv Yar direction.[75]

Order of Battle: Elements of the Russian 98th Airborne (VDV) Division, including its 217th VDV Regiment and 215th Reconnaissance Battalion, are reportedly operating near Chasiv Yar.[76] Elements of the 132nd Motorized Rifle Brigade (51st Combined Arms Army [CAA], formerly 1st Donetsk People's

Republic [DNR] Army Corps [AC], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Oleksandro-Shulytne.[77]

**Russian forces recently advanced in the Toretsk direction.**

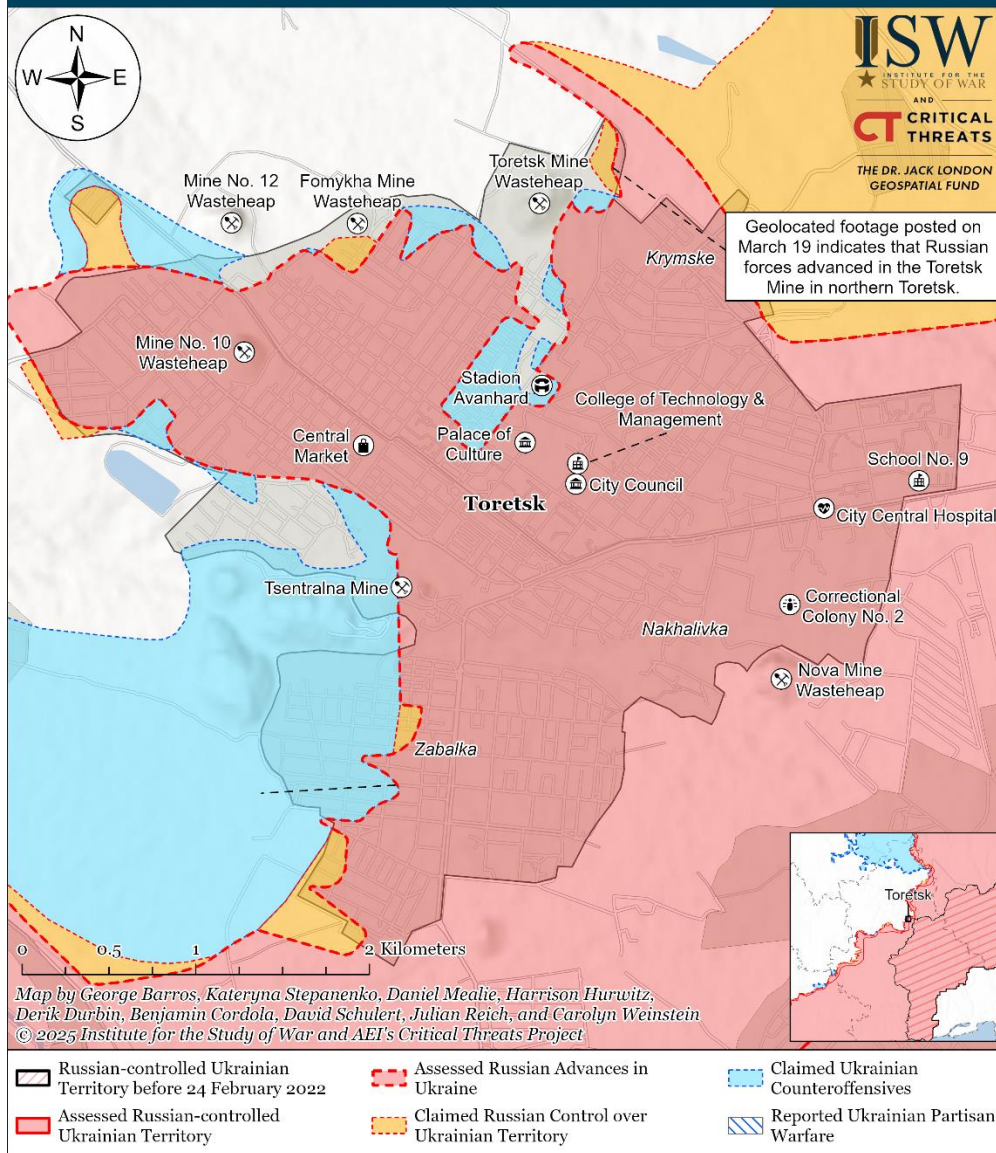
Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on March 19 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced northwestward in northern Toretsk.[78]

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed on March 19 that Russian forces advanced up to 400 meters northwest of Toretsk near the Toretska Mine.[79]

Russian forces attacked near Toretsk itself, east of Toretsk near Druzhba, and north of Toretsk near Krymske, Dachne, and Dyliivka on March 19 and 20.[80]

Russian milbloggers claimed on March 19 and 20 that Russian forces are attempting to cut Ukrainian logistics near Toretsk and seize control of the roads that Ukrainian forces are using to enter and exit Toretsk.[81] One milblogger claimed that recent Russian advances near the former Berezka Pioneer Camp Site in western Toretsk will complicate Ukrainian attempts to evacuate and resupply positions using cargo drones and armored vehicles.

## Assessed Control of Terrain in Toretsk March 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST



### Russian forces recently advanced in the Pokrovsk direction.

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on March 19 and 20 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced to the T-0504 Pokrovsk-Kostyantynivka highway west of Vodyane Druhe (east of Pokrovsk) and to Nova Street in northern Shevchenko (south of Pokrovsk).[82]

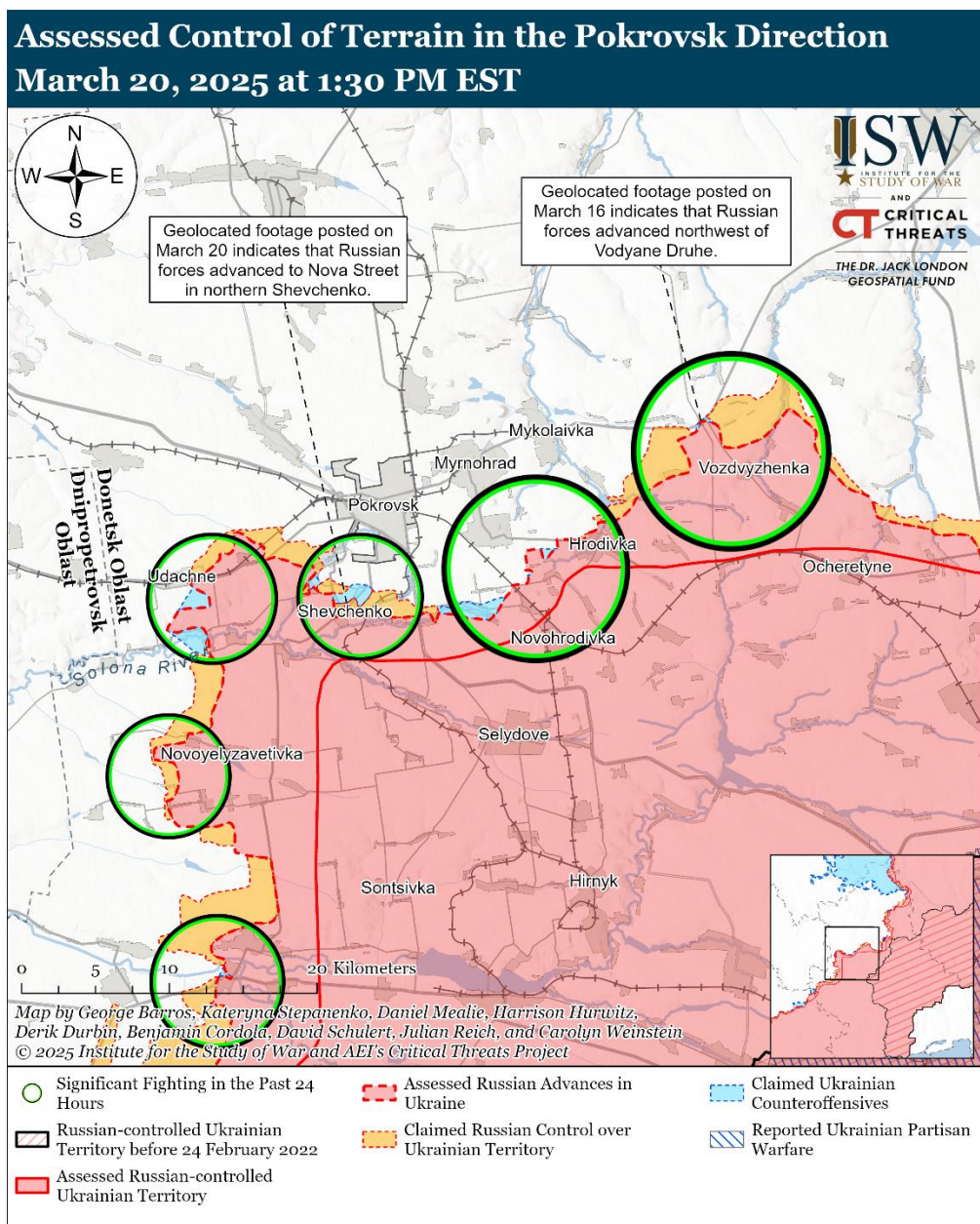
Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed on March 19 that elements of the Russian 68th Tank Regiment (150th Motorized Rifle Division, 8th CAA, SMD) advanced 800 meters from Novobakhmutivka toward Oleksandropil (both east of Pokrovsk) near the H-20 Donetsk City-Kostyantynivka highway and seized a Ukrainian stronghold and a windbreak.[83]

Russian forces attacked northeast of Pokrovsk near Tarasivka; east of Pokrovsk near Yelyzavetivka, Oleksandropil, Panteleymonivka, Promin, Zelene Pole, and Novotoretske; southeast of Pokrovsk near



Lysivka; southwest of Pokrovsk near Novoukrainka, Kotlyne, Zvirove, Udachne, Uspenivka, and Preobrazhenka; and west of Pokrovsk toward Serhiivka on March 19 and 20.[84]

Ukrainian Khortytsia Group of Forces Spokesperson Major Viktor Trehubov reported on March 20 that Pokrovsk remains the most active area on the eastern front and that Russian forces are struggling to restore intensity and continue offensive operations in the area.[85] Trehubov added that Russian soldiers are exhausted, and Russian forces are experiencing unspecified manpower and materiel shortages. The deputy commander of a Ukrainian tank battalion operating in the Pokrovsk direction reported that the situation in the Pokrovsk direction has slightly improved as Russian infantry are mainly attacking with motorcycles and buggies.[86] The deputy commander noted that Russian forces are not using armored vehicles due to successful Ukrainian drone strikes in the area and that Ukrainian forces have stabilized the area and occasionally counterattack.



**Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Kurakhove on March 20 but did not make any confirmed advances.**

Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed on March 20 that Russian forces advanced up to 1.5 kilometers deep near the fields northeast of Rozlyv (southwest of Kurakhove).[87]

Russian forces attacked west of Kurakhove near Kostyantynopil and near Rozlyv and Bahatyr (southwest of Kurakhove) on March 19 and 20.[88]

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 656th Motorized Rifle Regiment (subordination unclear, reportedly part of the Eastern Grouping of Forces) are reportedly operating near Rozlyv.[89]

**Russian forces recently advanced in the Velyka Novosilka direction.**

Assessed Russian advances: Geolocated footage published on March 19 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced along Stepova Street in eastern Novosilka (southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[90]

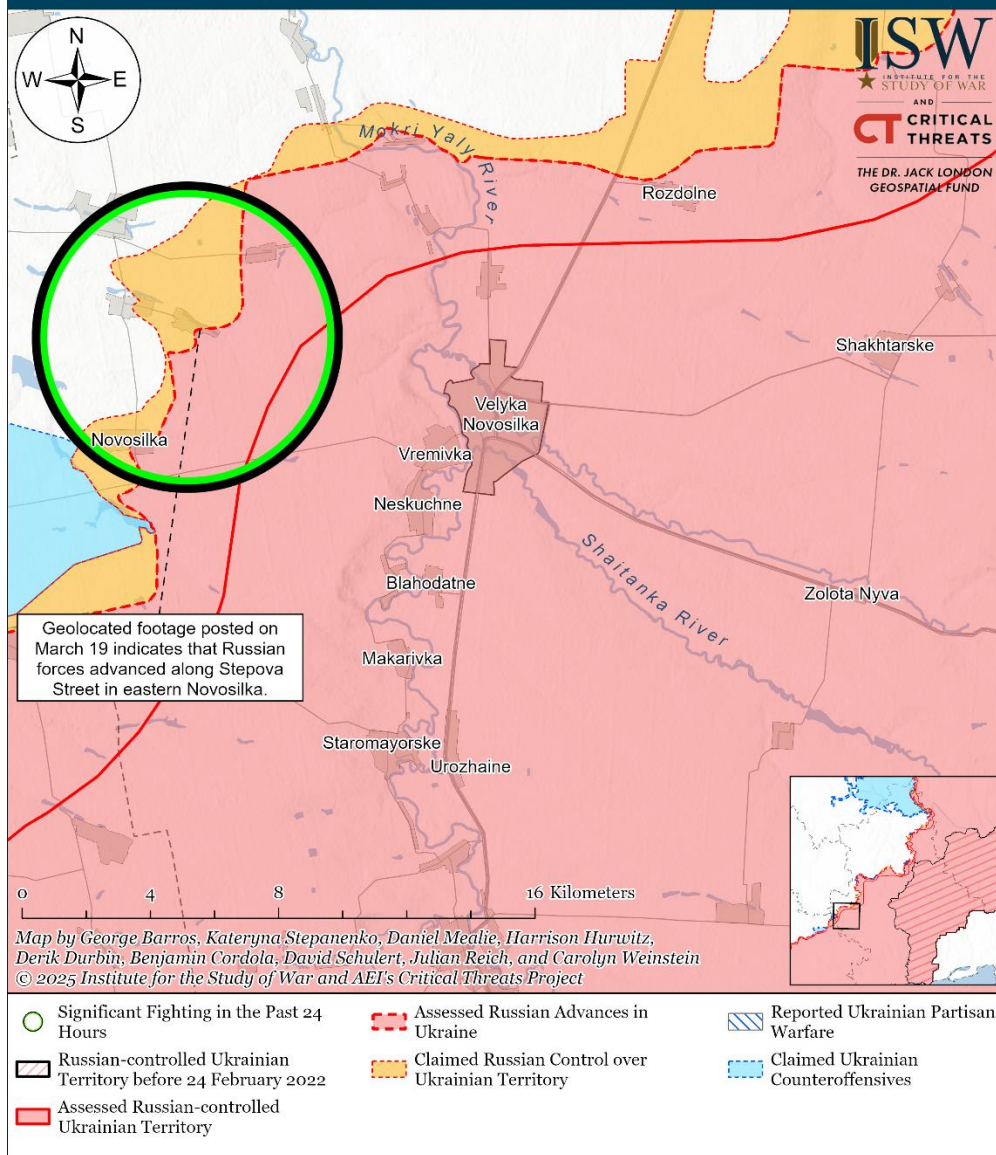
Unconfirmed claims: A Russian milblogger claimed on March 20 that Russian forces seized a pocket south of Pryvilne (west of Velyka Novosilka).[91] Another Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced near Novodarivka (southwest of Velyka Novosilka) and up to 1.5 kilometers deep west of Velyka Novosilka near Shevchenko and Vilne Pole.[92]

Russian forces attacked northwest of Velyka Novosilka near Burlatske; west of Velyka Novosilka near Pryvilne; and southwest of Velyka Novosilka toward Novopil on March 19 and 20.[93] A Russian milblogger claimed that Ukrainian forces counterattacked near Vesele (northwest of Velyka Novosilka) and near Novodarivka (southwest of Velyka Novosilka).[94]

Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported on March 20 that Russian advances in the Velyka Novosilka direction have significantly slowed.[95] Mashovets noted that elements of the Russian 40th and 336th naval infantry brigades (both of the Pacific Fleet) are operating in the 36th CAA's (Eastern Military District [EMD]) area of responsibility (AoR) and are becoming less combat effective after suffering significant personnel losses.

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 36th Motorized Rifle Brigade (29th CAA, EMD) and of the 14th Spetsnaz Brigade (Russian General Staff's Main Directorate [GRU]) are reportedly operating in the Velyka Novosilka direction.[96] Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 127th Motorized Rifle Division (5th CAA, EMD) are attacking near Dniproenerhiya (north of Velyka Novosilka) and near Vesele.[97]

**Assessed Control of Terrain in the Velyka Novosilka Direction  
March 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST**



**Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)**

**Neither Ukrainian nor Russian sources reported fighting in the Hulyaipole direction on March 20.**

Order of Battle: Drone operators of the Russian 64th Motorized Rifle Brigade (35th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Eastern Military District [EMD]) reportedly struck a Ukrainian drone control point in Hulyaipole.[98]

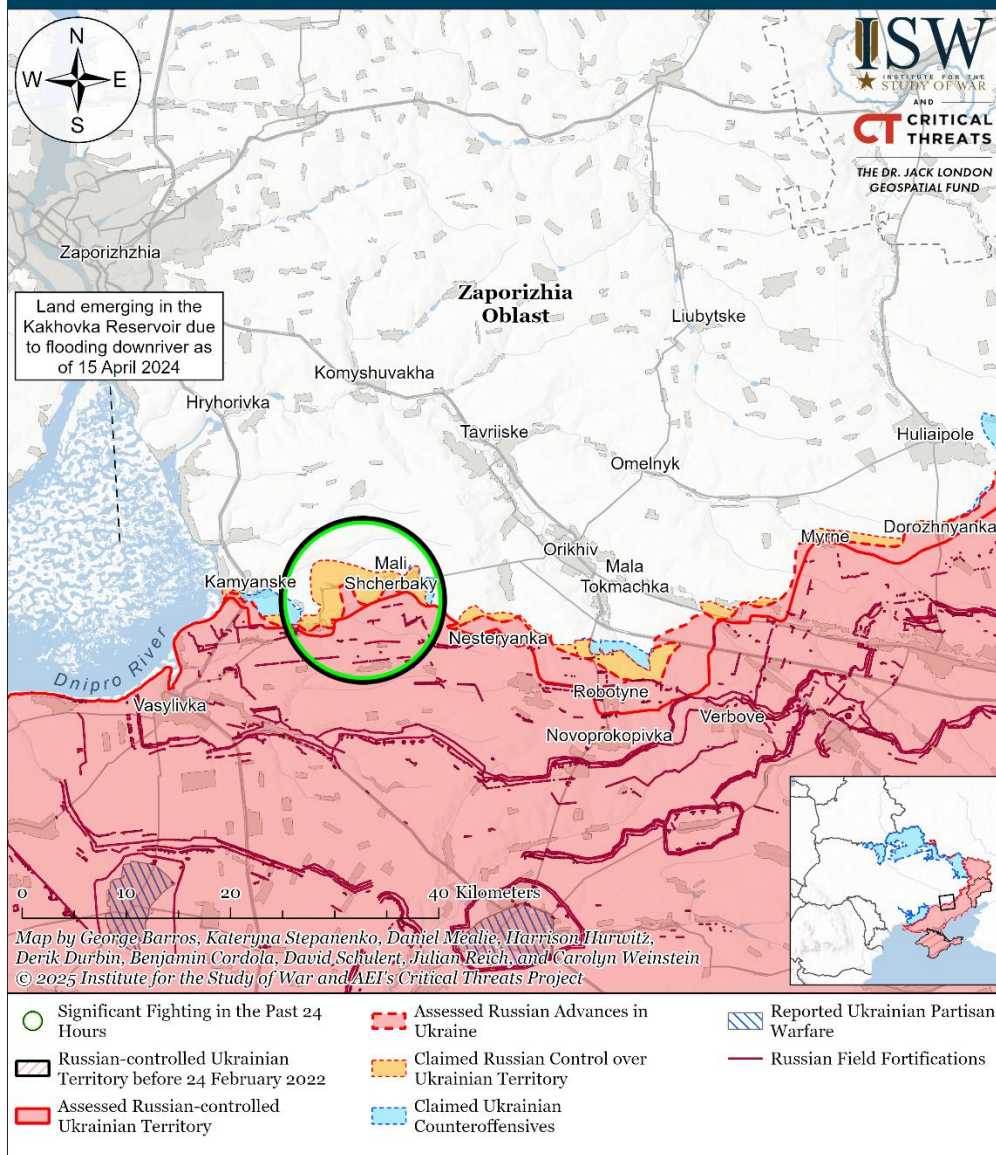
**Russian forces continued ground attacks in western Zaporizhia Oblast on March 20 but did not make any confirmed advances.**

Unconfirmed claims: Russian milbloggers claimed on March 19 and 20 that elements of the Russian 247th Airborne (VDV) Regiment (7th VDV Division) advanced north of Pyatykhatky and cleared Lobkove (both northwest of Robotyne) and that other Russian forces advanced to Novodanylivka (north of Robotyne).[99] Ukrainian military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets reported that Russian forces recently advanced between 1.5 and 1.7 kilometers towards the T-0812 Orikhiv-Kamyanske road between Stepove and Shcherbaky (both northwest of Robotyne) and advanced 1.5 to 1.6 kilometers towards Stepove and seized Pyatykhatky.[100]

Russian forces attacked northwest of Robotyne near Novoandriivka, Lobkove, Stepove, Mali Shcherbaky, and Shcherbaky and north of Robotyne near Novodanylivka on March 19 and 20.[101]

Order of Battle: Artillery elements of the Russian 429th Motorized Rifle Regiment (19th Motorized Rifle Division, 58th CAA, Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly striking Ukrainian targets in the Zaporizhia direction.[102] Elements of the Russian 247th VDV Regiment are reportedly operating near Stepove, Mali Shcherbaky and Shcherbaky.[103] Mashovets reported that elements of the Russian 108th VDV Regiment (7th VDV Division) with support from the Russian 42nd Motorized Rifle Division (58th CAA, [SMD]) are attacking Ukrainian positions near Pyatykhatky and between Stepove and Mali Shcherbaky.[104]

## Assessed Control of Terrain in the Zaporizhia Direction March 20, 2025 at 1:30 PM EST

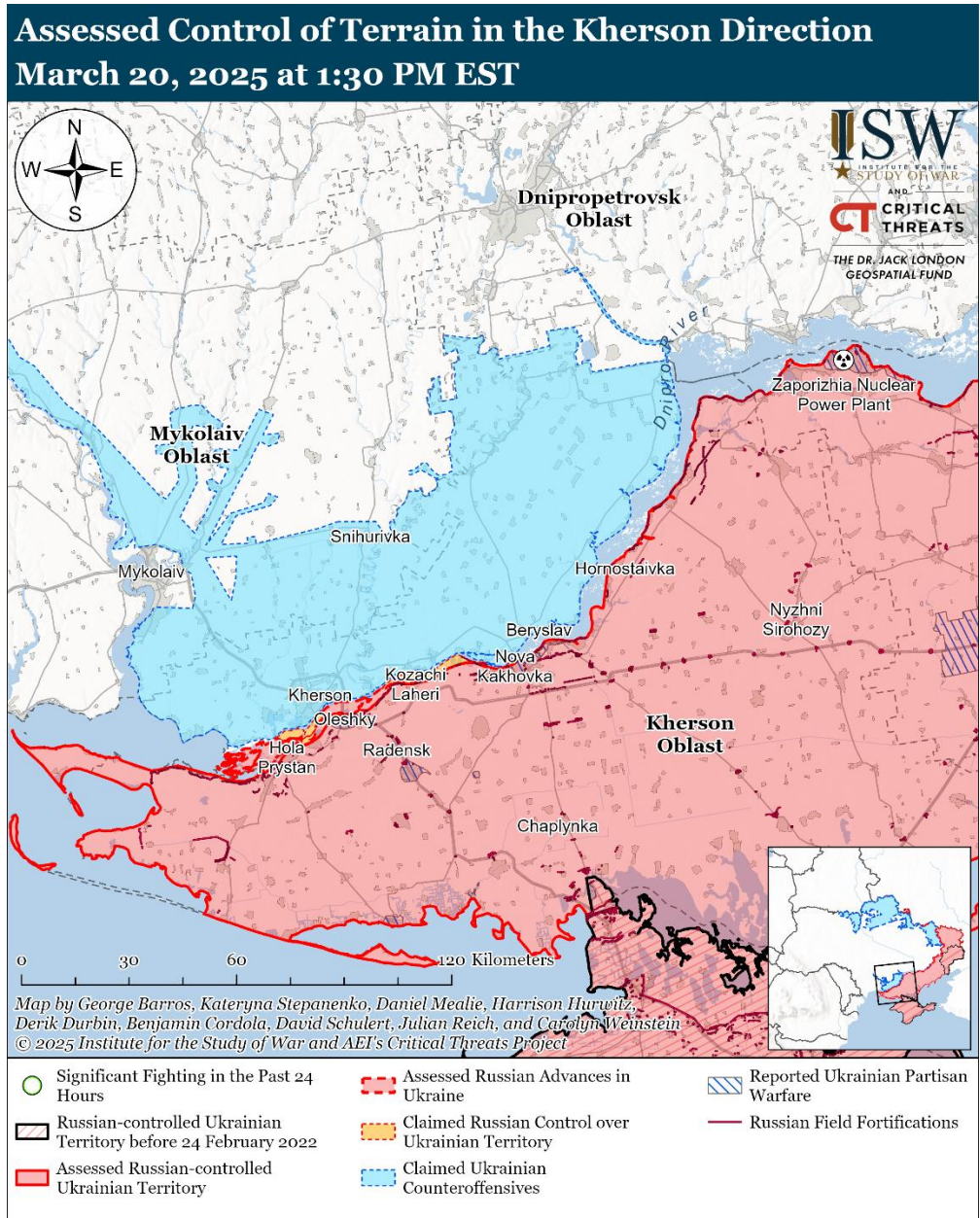


**Neither Ukrainian nor Russian sources reported fighting in the Kherson direction on March 20.**

### **Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign (Russian Objective: Target Ukrainian military and civilian infrastructure in the rear and on the frontline)**

Russian forces conducted a series of missile and drone strikes against Ukraine on the night of March 19 to 20. The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Russian forces launched 171 Shahed and decoy drones from the directions of Oryol City; Shatalovo, Smolensk Oblast; Millerovo, Rostov Oblast; Primorsko-Akhtarsk, Krasnodar Krai; and occupied Cape Chauda, Crimea.[105] The Ukrainian Air Force reported that Ukrainian forces downed 75 drones over Kharkiv, Poltava, Sumy, Chernihiv, Cherkasy, Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia, Kirovohrad, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson oblasts and that 63 decoy

drones were "lost," likely due to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) interference. Official Ukrainian sources reported that Russian drones damaged civilian infrastructure in Kirovohrad, Sumy, and Donetsk oblasts and that a Russian missile strike damaged civilian infrastructure in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast.[106] Ukrainian train operator Ukrzaliznytsia reported that Russian forces targeted railway infrastructure in Kirovohrad Oblast.[107]



**Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts (Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization)**

Russia may extend military veteran status to Russian milbloggers and military correspondents covering the war in Ukraine, likely in an effort to further coopt and appease the Russian ultranationalist milblogger community. A Russian Federation Council Senator from occupied Donetsk Oblast,

Alexander Voloshin, stated on March 19 that he is preparing a bill that would extend combat veteran status to Russian journalists working in occupied Ukraine, combat zones, and "counter-terrorist operation zones," presumably including Kursk Oblast.[108] Russian milbloggers have frequently argued throughout the course of the war for Russia to extend combat veteran status to Russian milbloggers, entitling them to receive the same social benefits as Russian soldiers.[109] This bill likely aims to further consolidate the Kremlin's control over and appease Russian ultranationalist milbloggers, particularly as the Kremlin continues to entertain possible future peace negotiations in Ukraine and bilateral talks with the United States, which have drawn milblogger opposition.[110]

Putin continues efforts to appear supportive of families of missing Russian soldiers. Putin signed a decree on March 20 ordering the state-run Defenders of the Fatherland Foundation to help relatives find Russian soldiers who are declared missing-in-action (MIA).[111] Putin recently expanded social support to families of MIA Russian soldiers.[112]

### **Russian Technological Adaptations (Russian objective: Introduce technological innovations to optimize systems for use in Ukraine)**

Nothing significant to report.

### **Activities in Russian-occupied areas (Russian objective: Consolidate administrative control of annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian citizens into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)**

*ISW is not publishing coverage of activities in Russian-occupied areas today.*

### **Significant activity in Belarus (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks)**

Putin held a phone call with Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko on March 20 to review recent decisions made during Lukashenko's March 13 visit to Moscow and Putin's assessment of progress regarding "Russian-American dialogue" on Ukraine.[113]

Lukashenko hosted the Chairperson of the Council of Peoples of the Republika Srpska of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Srebrenka Golic, in Minsk on March 19 and 20.[114] Lukashenko asserted that Belarus and Russia view the U.S.-backed Dayton Accords as having entrenched "acute...contradictions" into the fabric of Bosnia and Herzegovina's society and extended joint Russian and Belarusian "support" to Bosnia and Herzegovina.[115] Golic announced on March 19 that Belarus and Bosnia and Herzegovina are working to sign a bilateral education agreement.[116]

**Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.**

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